

I urge opposition to the Levin amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I yield myself such time as I may consume to say to my colleague, what a truly heartfelt, remarkable set of comments. I thank the Senator for contributing to this important debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield 15 minutes to the Senator from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, as I begin my remarks, by coincidence, I am following my good friend from Oregon, GORDON SMITH. It is purely by coincidence that we are lined up to address our thoughts on this important and most critical issue facing our country. I say to my colleague from Oregon, my opening comments are exactly the Senator's closing comments.

I plead with my colleagues during the remaining hours of this debate to try to stay away from the personal attacks and the mindless use of labels that we are tempted to gravitate to in order to impassion our constituencies. Such approaches do little to contribute to an understanding of the important subject before the Senate.

The Senator from Oregon eloquently described the loss of Thomas Tucker and of Kristian Menchaca from Houston, TX, the insane and hideous loss of life, and how it occurred. These young men and the 2,500 others who have lost their lives, along with the 18,000 who have been permanently injured, deserve better than some of the rhetoric and some of the discussion I have heard over the last number of days in talking about this issue.

I believe all 100 Senators in this Chamber care deeply about what happens to our men and women in uniform. I don't question for a single minute the patriotism of a single colleague. While we may disagree about how to successfully conduct our policies with respect to Iraq, we all deserve to give to our constituencies an intelligent discussion of these matters rather than resort to language of "cut and run" or "lie and die" or other such talk. It is that kind of rhetoric which causes most of our constituents to become disgusted with Congress.

I may disagree with my colleague from Oregon over the Levin amendment. In fact, I am a cosponsor of this amendment, and I believe CARL LEVIN and JACK REED have put us on the right track, which I am going to explain. I can fully respect those with a different point of view in all of this, while disagreeing with them. I do not question for a minute any Senator's goals or patriotism. I hope the rest of my colleagues over the remaining hours will conduct themselves accordingly. Before giving your speech, read the speech of GORDON SMITH and then de-

cide whether you are going to engage in the kind of talk you may have prepared in your remarks in this Senate.

I thank CARL LEVIN, JACK REED, and others who put this amendment together, which I have asked to be a supporter of. It is a major step in getting our Iraq policy headed in the right direction. I also thank our colleagues who met on numerous occasions over the last several weeks, to have discussions about how best to frame this amendment. They were thoughtful discussions which I was pleased to participate in with Senators CARL LEVIN, JOE BIDEN, HARRY REID, JACK REED, DIANNE FEINSTEIN, DICK DURBIN, JOHN KERRY, and RUSS FEINGOLD. The Levin amendment is a consensus product of those conversations. Any one of us developing an amendment on this subject might have done it somewhat differently, emphasized some ideas more than others, included more specificity in the information we are seeking from the President with respect to benchmarks and a timeframe for the significant redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. But I believe that the amendment that emerged from that process is useful for a serious and important debate on the need to begin the process of re-deploying our forces this year from Iraq and turning over full responsibility for governing that country to Iraq's democratically elected leaders.

I believe very strongly that it is very appropriate we begin any discussion about Iraq by first commending our men and women in uniform who have served so nobly there. Whatever else your views may be, it is critically important that they know this great Senate respects and honors their service. Our men and women in uniform have performed with honor, bravery, and skill in attempting to bring order and stability into the post-Saddam Iraq. They have put themselves in harm's way, as I said a moment ago. More than 2,500 of our sons and daughters have given their lives serving our Nation. Thousands more have suffered life-altering injuries. The American people and the Iraqi people owe them, more than any other group, in my view, a great debt of gratitude for their service.

We in Congress must continue to provide them with every resource to ensure they return home safely and as expeditiously as possible. Whatever disagreements may arise during the course of our debate about the administration's Iraq policy, those disagreements should in no way be interpreted as criticisms of our troops. Every one of my colleagues, as I said a moment ago, cares deeply and respects deeply the service of these men and women in uniform.

Our disagreement with the President and his administration is that we believed we were misled in 2002 about the rationale for going to war in Iraq. There was hyped intelligence, cherry-picking of intelligence data to paint a picture of a threat, in my view, that

did not exist at the time. That is and was unconscionable.

After the war began, the President continued to mislead America about the course of the war, the adequacy of planning, the postwar reconstruction, and the bill the American people would be asked to pay for the cost of U.S. involvement. Key members of the administration played critical roles in disseminating information that was inaccurate.

I have said on a number of occasions that if I had known then what I know now—namely, that Saddam Hussein possessed no weapons of mass destruction—I would not have given the President my vote for a resolution to use force in Iraq. I doubt there would have been a vote had all Members been aware of the information we now know exists.

Having said all of that, it is not possible to turn back the clock. We are where we are with respect to our involvement in Iraq. Sectarian violence has now outpaced that of foreign jihadists and ex-Baathists and insurgents as the greatest threat confronting American and Iraqi forces and Iraqi civilians. Ethnic mistrust, according to a recent cable from our Ambassador in Iraq to Secretary of State Rice, is increasingly ripping that country apart at the seams. That is from our Ambassador in Baghdad.

According to that same cable from our Ambassador—and I am not quoting, but this is the substance—the Iraqi people largely blame, unfortunately, the United States for the current situation, seeing their own Government as a puppet of the United States and believing that much of the violence in Iraq is being allowed by the United States as a type of retribution for the problems we faced in our mission to Iraq. Those are not my views but the views expressed by the American Ambassador in Baghdad writing to the Secretary of State saying this is how we are perceived. I strongly object to that kind of conclusion, but that is the conclusion of our Ambassador.

Iraq's economy is also in a shambles. Three years after major combat operations ended, the Iraqi infrastructure remains inadequate by every measure. Oil production, electricity generation, and the availability of clean water are all below prewar levels. Schools and hospitals lack adequate supplies and personnel. No matter how the administration tries to paint the picture, the reality which we all accept and know is that the chaos in Iraq is transparent and it is growing.

Most importantly, Iraq's elected Government is now poised to function, but only after 5 months of political haggling over key Cabinet and sub-Cabinet posts. That is the reality, colleagues, that the U.S. policy must now address in Iraq.

To be fair, there has been some good news. Over the last 10 days, particularly with the announcement that U.S. forces were able to detect and eliminate the Jordanian terrorist Abu